Department of State

TELEGRAM

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AN: D780153-0226

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PAGE 01 KINGST 03113 080730Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 /039 W
------------------056606 0022397 /21
R 071350Z APR 70
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0577
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
USINT HAVANA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY RB DATE 25 JUN 1982
RDS☐or XD☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. RE ON(3)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☒ RELEASABLE☒
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3113

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, JM
SUBJECT: RUMORS OF SNAP ELECTION PROMPT DENIAL FROM MANLEY

1. OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS THAT A GENERAL ELECTION MAY BE IN THE EARLY OFFING. THESE RUMORS FINALLY SURFACED IN THE PRESS THE MORNING OF APRIL 4 AND LED PRIME MINISTER MICHAEL MANLEY TO A QUICK DENIAL ON THE EVENING OF THE SAME DAY. IN A SPEECH INAUGURATING " NATIONAL EXPORT WEEK", MANLEY SAID "... THE GOVERNMENT HAS FOUR (SIC) MORE YEARS IN OFFICE IN THE PRESENT TERM AND WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR THE FOUR YEARS."

2. WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER'S DENIAL WILL END THE RUMORS IS HARD TO SAY. A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS SUGGEST THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS AT LEAST CONTEMPLATED THE IDEA OF CALLING A SNAP ELECTION FOLLOWING THE NEGOTIATION OF AN EXTENDED FUND FACILITY (EFF) WITH INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF). THESE OBSERVERS SAY THAT THE NEW AGREEMENT WITH THE IMF WILL FORCE JAMAICA TO UNDERTAKE

FAR GREATER AUSTERITIES THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE TO DATE.

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THEY SAY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD DESCRIBE THE RENEGOTIATION OF THE EFF AS A VICTORY, AND THEN CALL THE ELECTION-- IN FULL KNOWLEDGE THAT THE HARDSHIPS WHICH LIE AHEAD WOULD SOON REDUCE FURTHER THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY'S POPULARITY AND SHARPLE REDUCE ITS CHANCES OF RETURNING TO POWER WERE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL ITS TERM ENDS IN DECEMBER, 1981.

3. THE OPPOSITION JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY HAS APPARENTLY TAKEN THE RUMORS SERIOUSLY. OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, THE JLP HAS RUN SEVERAL FULL-PAGE ADS CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT. A JLP SOURCE SAYS THAT THE ADS ARE PART OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN WHICH WILL, IF THE MANEY HOLDS OUT, CONTINUE OVER THE NEXT TWO OR THREE MONTHS. THE SOURCE SAID THE POSSIBILITY OF A SNAP ELECTION WAS VERY MUCH IN THE MIND OF THE JLP LEADERSHIP WHEN IT DECIDED ON THE CAMPAIGN.
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